

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05

CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01

AGR-05 COME-00 CU-02 /083 W
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R 122045Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8925

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

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TAGS: PFOR, ETRD, EINV, EWWT, TD, RQ, US

SUBJECT: TRINIDAD AND PUERTO RICO HOLD INFORMAL TALKS

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 0640

SUMMARY

A DELEGATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO (GCPR) -- ACCOMPANIED BY A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT -- HELD TALKS LARGELY ON ECONOMIC MATTERS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (GOTT) IN PORT OF SPAIN MARCH 10 AND 11. ISSUES DISCUSSED INCLUDED AGRICULTURE, TRADE, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, MARITIME TRANSPORT, AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES. NO FIRM AGREEMENTS WERE REACHED, BUT A TRINIDAD DELEGATION IS EXPECTED TO VISIT PUERTO RICO SHORTLY TO EXPLORE DETAILS

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OF AREAS WHERE FUTURE COOPERATION SEEMS FEASIBLE.

DISCUSSIONS CULMINATED WITH TWO-HOUR INFORMAL MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS (SEPTEL), AND PUERTO RICAN DELEGATION DEPARTED VERY PLEASED AT NATURE AND TONE OF ENTIRE DISCUSSIONS. TEXT OF JOINT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT CLOSE OF MEETINGS IS BEING TRANSMITTED SEPTEL. END SUMMARY.

1. A SIX-MAN DELEGATION HEADED BY GCPR SECRETARY OF STATE JUAN ALBORS (AND INCLUDING AN OFFICER FROM ARA/CAR) MET MARCH 10-11 WITH A 12-MAN TRINIDADIAN DELEGATION HEADED BY MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE (ALSO PETROLEUM AND MINES) ERROL MAHABIR. MEETING WAS RESULT OF A PERSONAL INVITATION FROM PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS TO GCPR GOVERNOR HERNANDEZ COLON TO "RESUME THE PUERTO RICO-TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO DIALOGUE THAT BEGAN ALMOST A DECADE AGO." TRINIDADIAN DELEGATION WAS ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN EXPLORING TRADE POSSIBILITIES OFFERED BY TERMS OF THE DRAFT COMPACT OF PERMANENT UNION, NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY GCPR AND USG. FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS OUTLINE ITEMS DISCUSSED AND PRINCIPAL ISSUES RAISED BY BOTH SIDES.

2. AGRICULTURE: MAHABIR SUGGESTED JOINT EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY NEW SOURCES OF SUPPLY OF BASIC COMMODITIES SUCH AS WHEAT, INPUTS FOR ANIMAL FEED, ETC. PUERTO RICANS ASKED FOR DETAILS OF THE CARIBBEAN FOOD PLAN PROPOSED BY PM WILLIAMS IN 1974, AND ALSO EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST IN THE TRINIDAD-GUYANA JOINT VENTURE IN CORN AND SOYA. ALBORS PROPOSED EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES OF JOINT VENTURES IN FOOD PROCESSING FACILITIES TO INCREASE EXPORT TRADE.

3. TRADE DISCUSSIONS CENTERED AROUND INCREASING MUTUAL PR-TT TRADE AND EXPLOITING POSSIBILITIES OF U.S. GSP SCHEME. ALBORS LAMENTED FACT THAT PUERTO RICO IS NOW FACED WITH HIGH LABOR COSTS AND IS LOSING LABOR INTENSIVE INDUSTRY TO OTHER CARIBBEAN STATES, AND TRINIDADIAN TEAM RESPONDED THAT LABOR COSTS IN TRINIDAD ARE ALSO RELATIVELY HIGH. NONETHELESS, THE TEAMS THOUGHT THAT OPPORTUNITIES MAY EXIST FOR FURTHER ELABORATION OF COMPLEMENTARY INDUSTRIES - E.G., SUB-ASSEMBLY OPERATIONS IN CARICOM COUNTRIES, WITH FINAL ASSEMBLY BEING PERFORMED IN PUERTO RICO OF HIGH-TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS.

4. THE TOPIC WHICH AROUSED GREATEST INTEREST IN BOTH DELEGATIONS WAS COMPLEMENTATION OPERATIONS INVOLVING THE ENERGY-BASED INDUSTRIES PLANNED BY TRINIDAD. PUERTO RICAN TEAM PROPOSED AS AN EXAMPLE THAT SEMI-FINISHED STEEL COULD BE SHIPPED TO PR FOR RE-ROLLING, POINT OUT THAT THIS WOULD PROVIDE MARKET FOR TRINIDAD EVEN IF USG SHOULD RESTRICT STEEL IMPORTS. GCPR DELEGATES ALSO POINTED OUT THAT PRESENT SYSTEM OF REBATING TO GCPR TREASURY U.S. TAXES COLLECTED ON PUERTO RICAN GOODS GIVES GCPR ADDED FLEXIBILITY IN DEALING

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WITH FOREIGN SUPPLIERS OF RAW MATERIALS OR PARTIALLY ASSEMBLED PRODUCTS.

5. ON MARITIME TRANSPORT, ECONOMIC RESEARCH DIRECTOR OF PUERTO RICAN MARITIME AUTHORITY GAVE DETAILED PRESENTATION TO SHOW THAT TRINIDAD'S TRADE WITH U.S.A. COULD BE TRANSSHIPPED THROUGH PUERTO RICO AT LOWER COSTS THAN SHIPPERS ARE NOW PAYING. HE SAID THIS IS DUE TO FACT THAT PR MARITIME AUTHORITY IS NOT A SHIPPING CONFERENCE MEMBER, AND THAT ITS SHIPS HAVE SUBSTANTIAL EXCESS CAPACITY ON NORTHBOUND TRIPS. TRINIDAD DELEGATION SEEMED INTERESTED BY TRANSSHIPMENT POSSIBILITIES, AS WELL AS IDEA OF POSSIBLE JOINT VENTURE OWNERSHIP OF SHIPS TO PROVIDE FEEDER SERVICE FROM EASTERN CARIBBEAN TO PUERTO RICO. NO SPECIFIC MENTION WAS MADE OF NAMUCAR, BUT TRINIDADIAN IMPLIED THAT THEY DO NOT PLAN TO JOIN THIS CARIBBEAN REGIONAL SHIPPING VENTURE.

6. TOURISM PROMOTION AND THE EXCHANGE OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL GROUPS WERE ALSO DISCUSSED. TRINIDAD DELEGATION NOT UNEXPECTEDLY MADE PRESENTATION ON SUBJECT OF U.S. DUTY ON RUM, CLAIMING THAT IMPORTS OF WEST INDIAN RUM WOULD NOT HURT SALE OF PUERTO RICAN RUM, TO WHICH GCPR OFFICIALS MADE USUAL REBUTTAL. AT CLOSE OF DAY-LONG SESSION, SECRETARY ALBORS INVITED THE TRINIDADIAN TO SEND A DELEGATION TO PUERTO RICO VERY SOON, IN ORDER TO CONTINUE DETAILED DISCUSSIONS ON ITEMS RAISED BY BOTH SIDES.

7. COMMENT: THE PUERTO RICAN DELEGATION WAS VERY PLEASED AT ITS RECEPTION IN TRINIDAD, AND BOTH SIDES FOUND SEVERAL AREAS OF MUTUAL INTEREST WORTHY OF FURTHER EXPLORATION. THE TRINIDADIAN OBVIOUSLY HAD CAREFULLY STUDIED THE PROPOSED COMPACT OF PERMANENT UNION AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WISHED TO EXPLORE ITS POTENTIAL. THE GCPR OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, STRESSED THAT THE COMPACT IS NOW UNDER LEGISLATIVE REVIEW, AND THEY EMPHASIZED IN THEIR PRESENTATIONS WAYS TO EXPAND MUTUAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS WHICH COULD BE ADDRESSED UNDER EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES.
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